

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please cancel claims 1-27.

Please add new claims 28-56 as set forth below.

The following is a complete list of all claims in this application.

1-27. (Cancelled)

28. (New) A system for consummating, managing, and retrieving at least one digitally signed, legally binding contract between a consumer of manufacturing services and at least one manufacturing vendor over a network, the system comprising:

a central controller for rendering a three-dimensional representation of an article design;

a transmitter for distributing the three-dimensional representation to the at least one manufacturing vendor over the network;

a receiver for receiving at least one digital signature; and

a processor capable of mapping the at least one digital signature to specific manufacturing instructions associated with at least one feature within the three-dimensional representation of the article design.

29. (New) The system of claim 28, wherein the consumer of manufacturing services and the at least one manufacturing vendors are distinct and unrelated business entities, and

wherein a business relationship between the consumer and the at least one manufacturing vendor is defined through the at least one legally binding contract including the manufacturing instructions associated with the at least one feature of the three-dimensional representation of the article design.

30. (New) The system of claim 28, wherein the at least one digital signature is applied by a representative of the at least one manufacturing vendor.

31. (New) The system of claim 30, wherein the digital signature of the representative is applied to only the at least one manufacturing instruction for which the representative has authorization.

32. (New) The system of claim 30, wherein the at least one representative of the manufacturing vendor is a quality assurance inspector and the at least one digital signature is applied to the manufacturing instructions to ensure compliance with the manufacturing instructions; and

wherein the at least one digital signature is included in said legally binding contract.

33. (New) The system of claim 28, wherein the at least one digital signature is applied by at least one representative of the consumer of the manufacturing services for the purpose of ensuring the accuracy of the manufacturing instructions, and where the at least one digital signature is included in the at least one legally binding contract.

34. (New) The system of claim 33, wherein the at least one representative of the consumer is a quality assurance inspector responsible for verifying compliance with manufacturing instructions.

35. (New) The system of claim 33, further comprising a central data store containing the at least one digital signature, where the at least one digital signature is associated with the manufacturing instructions associated with particular features within the three-dimensional representation of the article design.

36. (New) The system of claim 28, wherein the at least one digital signature is applied by at least one representative of an auditor business entity that is independent of both the consumer of manufacturing services and the at least one manufacturing vendor for the purpose of ensuring the accuracy of the manufacturing instructions, and where the at least one digital signature is included in the at least one legally binding contract.

37. (New) The system of claim 36, further comprising a central data store containing the at least one digital signature, where the at least one digital signature is associated with the manufacturing instructions associated with particular features within the three-dimensional representation of the article design.

38. (New) The system of claim 28, further comprising a central data store containing the three-dimensional representation of the article design, the specific manufacturing instructions associated with the article design, and the at least one digital signature.

39. (New) The system of claim 28, further comprising a software module for managing the distribution of the three-dimensional representation of the article design and associated manufacturing instructions to the at least one manufacturing vendor over the network.

40. (New) The system of claim 28, wherein said computer system includes a software module for managing the distribution of the three-dimensional representation of the article design and associated manufacturing instructions to an independent auditor.

41. (New) The system of claim 28, wherein the processor further validates and secures the at least one digital signature as legally valid and enforceable.

42. (New) A process for consummating, managing, and retrieving at least one digitally signed, legally binding contract between a consumer of manufacturing services and at least one manufacturing vendor over a network, the process comprising the steps of:

distributing a three-dimensional representation of an article design to the at least one manufacturing vendor over the network;

receiving at least one digital signature; and

mapping the at least one digital signature to specific manufacturing instructions associated with at least one feature within the three-dimensional representation of the article design.

43. (New) The process of claim 42, wherein the consumer of manufacturing services and the at least one manufacturing vendors are distinct and unrelated business entities, and

wherein a business relationship between the consumer and the at least one manufacturing vendor is defined through at least one legally binding contract including the manufacturing instructions associated with the at least one feature of the three dimensional representation of the article design.

44. (New) The process of claim 42, wherein the at least one digital signal is applied by a representative of the at least one manufacturing vendor.

45. (New) The process of claim 44, wherein the digital signature of the representative is applied to only the at least one manufacturing instruction for which the representative has authorization.

46. (New) The process of claim 44, wherein the at least one representative of the manufacturing vendor is a quality assurance inspector and the at least one vendor digital

signature is applied to the manufacturing instructions to ensure compliance with the manufacturing instructions; and

wherein the at least one digital signature is included in the at least one legally binding contract.

47. (New) The process of claim 42, wherein the at least one digital signature is applied by at least one representative of the consumer of the manufacturing services for the purpose of ensuring the accuracy of the manufacturing instructions, and where the at least one consumer digital signature is included in the at least one legally binding contract.

48. (New) The process of claim 47, wherein the at least one representative of the consumer is a quality assurance inspector responsible for verifying compliance with manufacturing instructions.

49. (New) The process of claim 47, further comprising the step of storing the at least one digital signature, where the at least one digital signature is associated with the manufacturing instructions associated with particular features within the three-dimensional representation of the article design.

50. (New) The process of claim 42, wherein the at least one digital signature is applied by at least one representative of an auditor business entity that is independent of both the consumer of manufacturing services and the at least one manufacturing vendor for the purpose of ensuring the accuracy of the manufacturing instructions, and where the at least one digital signature is included in the at least one legally binding contract.

51. (New) The process of claim 50, where the at least one manufacturing vendor comprises a plurality of manufacturing vendors, and

further comprising the step of managing the distribution of the three-dimensional representation of the article design and associated manufacturing instructions to the plurality of manufacturing vendors.

52. (New) The process of claim 42, further comprising the step of storing the three-dimensional representation of the article design, the specific manufacturing instructions associated with the article design, and the at least one digital signature.

53. (New) The process of claim 47, further comprising the step of storing the at least one digital signature, where the at least one digital signature is associated with said manufacturing instructions associated with particular features within the three-dimensional representation of the article design.

54. (New) The process of claim 42, further comprising the step of managing the distribution of the three-dimensional representation of the article design and associated manufacturing instructions to an independent auditor.

55. (New) The process of claim 42 further comprising the steps of validating and securing at least one digital signature as legally valid and enforceable.

56. (New) A system for consummating, managing, and retrieving at least one digitally signed, legally binding contract between a consumer of manufacturing services and at least one manufacturing vendor over a network, the process comprising the steps of:

means for distributing a three-dimensional representation of an article design to the at least one manufacturing vendor over the network;

means for receiving at least one digital signature; and

means for mapping the at least one vendor digital signature to specific manufacturing instructions associated with at least one feature within the three-dimensional representation of the article design.